RAINY-DAY DIVERSIONS

By Carolyn Wells

IT was only after much coaxing that the Boylston children persuaded their uncle to do some tricks at their party. So, after the young people were assembled, he good-naturedly began.

First he cleared the books and pictures from a small marble-topped table, and threw upon it about two dozen pennies. These he quickly rearranged, until all lay with the head sides up.

"Now, I'll turn my back," he said, "while one of you selects one penny and removes it from the rest." Uncle Bob turned his back and closed his eyes, while one of the young guests took a penny from the lot on the table.

"Very well," he said, turning round, "now I want every one of you children to look at that cent carefully, so you'll know it again. Note the date and condition of it, and then several of you may scratch marks on it with a pin or a penknife, so you can recognize it beyond all doubt."

The penny was passed from one to another, all scrutinized it, two or three boys scratched marks on it, and at last Ben Peterson, holding it tightly clasped in his hand, announced that they were all satisfied they would know it again.

Then Uncle Bob took a hat, swept into it about half the pennies on the table, invited Bob to drop in the marked penny, and then dropped in the rest from the table. Then he shook the hat until the jingling pennies were well mixed, and asked the children to think hard about the particular penny they had chosen, so that he might find it. He then allowed himself to be tightly blindfolded, and thrusting his hand into the hat drew it out again in a moment, holding a penny.

"Here you are!" he said, and to Ben's astonishment he handed out the marked cent.

Several times he repeated this trick, each time leaving out the previously marked coins; but none of the youngsters could guess how it was done, for the marks were not deep enough to be felt by the fingers; indeed, sometimes they were merely pencil marks.

Next, Uncle Bob seated himself at the little table. "Each of you," he said, "will please think of the name of some man celebrated in American history."

While the children were thinking, Uncle Bob left the room for a moment, and returned with a pencil and numerous small slips of paper.

"Tell me the names, and I will write them down," he said, "and if anyone else speaks the name you had thought of, you must choose another."

So one said Abraham Lincoln, and Uncle Bob wrote rapidly on a paper slip and dropped it into a hat. Another said Theodore Roosevelt, another George Washington, another General Lee, and so on. Each time Uncle Bob wrote on a paper, folded it and dropped it into the hat.

Then, holding the hat carefully, he asked the children to select one of their own number to pick out a slip.

So Bessie Morton picked out a slip, and hid it carefully in her hand.

"Pass it around," said Uncle Bob, "so that all may see it, and remember the name on it, but don't speak it or let me know what it is."

The name proved to be George Washington, and each child read it, and then Uncle Bob instructed Roger Hillis to burn it.

"Take this metal ash-tray," he said, "crumple up the paper, lay it on the tray, touch a lighted match to it, and let it burn."

In a moment the slip was reduced to black ashes.

Then Uncle Bob did a wonderful thing. He pushed up his sleeve, then rubbed the black paper ash on his bare forearm, and there suddenly appeared on his flesh the name George Washington clearly written in black letters.

This nearly took the children's breath away, and when he repeated the trick twice, and his arm showed Abraham Lincoln's name and next Theodore Roosevelt's, the young people decided that he was a true wizard.

Uncle Bob would not explain to the whole party how he did these tricks, but he afterward told Fred and Lucy.

As to the pennies, the whole point lay in keeping the lot on the marble table as long as possible. This kept them cold. The one that was passed from hand to hand and marked grew heated from its contact with warm flesh, and as the metal retains heat for several minutes it was easy for Uncle Bob, although blindfolded, to detect the warm coin among the cold ones.

The other trick was one of the sort Fred called frauds. Although the children spoke different names, Uncle Bob wrote "George Washington" on every slip. Thus, the paper taken from the hat was sure to contain that name. Then, when he left the room apparently to get the papers, he wrote on his arm the name, using for a pen a wooden toothpick dipped in milk. This dried immediately and was invisible, and when later he rubbed the ashes on it, it suddenly appeared in black letters. Each time it was of course necessary to provide fresh papers and write a new name in milk on his arm.

"But suppose no one had said George Washington," said Fred, as he thought it over.

"There never yet was a crowd of people who would omit that name from a list of famous Americans," said Uncle Bob. "Then the other times I fixed upon other popular heroes, and if the names had not been mentioned at first I should have kept on asking for more names until they were chosen. As to the writing in milk, that's a good trick, because if done carefully it never fails."

Luck of Tête-à-Tête

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mad, so that this was no wonder.

Not until early in September could Caldwell bear the sea-voyage, and even then he managed it by main strength for the sake of the opening night of "Tête-à-tête," already billed in three colors. Excepting for a charming face which he passed once or twice at the springs at St. Myon and worshiped because it reminded him vaguely of Miss Arnold, and a house at Châteldon that looked like a man-o'-war out for a walk, the entire face of France impressed Reeve as a desert. He was unspeakably glad when they set foot in New-York at last and he turned the key in Caldwell's apartment the very day of the premier.

Two hours afterward Wyndwynner came to the hotel to see them. The manager was a pale mauve tint, though he was doughtily predicting that the stars in their courses would be humming at least three of the "Tête-à-tête" lyrics by midnight.

"By the way," Reeve asked him, grasping at straws of unconcern, "that Miss Arnold that I wrote you about in the summer—did you ever hear anything from her, do you remember?"

Wyndwynner looked blank. "Arnold?" he said politely. "Little? Dumpy? Black?"

"No," Reeve corrected sweepingly, "tall, fair, stunning."

"Lord, no!" said Wyndwynner, "nobody like it. If you'd see what a bunch of carved wood we've got for a chorus—By the way," he added, "look in on me, will you, awhile before eight? I'd like to have you meet Miss Elfin."

But Caldwell, still limp from a particularly rough passage, did no more than slip in back somewhere just before the overture, and it was Reeve alone whom Wyndwynner marshaled to the dressing-room of the star with a hurried word or two left confronting the woman who was to make or mar "Tête-à-tête." And until that moment the truth had not crossed Reeve's mind.

Her maid was taking some roses from a box, and there were roses on a table, and the scent of them was heavy in the